



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to Ambassador Heidi Tagliavini, Diplomat in Residence at the Geneva Center for Security Policy

As delivered by Ambassador Ian Kelly
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
May 27, 2010

The United States joins others in welcoming Ambassador Tagliavini to the Permanent Council today and thanks her for her prodigious efforts on behalf of conflict prevention and resolution in the Caucasus.

Like other OSCE partners, we are focused on efforts to achieve a long-term, peaceful resolution to the conflict in Georgia and to develop better mechanisms for preventing and resolving crises. While we note that the findings contained in the independent international fact-finding mission's report on the origins and causes of the August 2008 conflict in Georgia are solely those of the mission itself, the report should not be used to assess blame but to identify lessons learned by all sides for the future.

Like others in the international community, we remain concerned that Russia has yet to fulfill the provisions of its August 12, 2008, cease-fire agreement with Georgia. Russia committed not only to withdraw its troops to positions held prior to the start of the hostilities, but also to provide free access for humanitarian assistance to the South Ossetia and Abkhazia regions. Furthermore, the September 2008 agreement with French President Sarkozy notes that "international observers from the OSCE will continue to carry out their mandate in the region."

We remind Russia that its characterization of these regions as independent is not accepted by the vast majority of nations and that this characterization does not relieve the Russian Federation of its commitments made in the two agreements with President Sarkozy in 2008.

As we work to improve the security and humanitarian situation in Georgia, we will continue to urge respect for the human rights of all individuals in the conflict areas; to call for free and unhindered access to the whole of Georgia; and to seek the safe, dignified and voluntary return of internally displaced persons and refugees. We will also continue to urge the re-establishment of an appropriate OSCE presence throughout Georgia. Along with the European Union, we remain convinced that the OSCE and other international actors can play a valuable role in resolving ongoing problems and providing critical monitoring of human rights and humanitarian conditions.

The United States remains committed to achieving a long-term, peaceful resolution to the conflict and will continue to support Georgia's sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.